

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2021

Remarks on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in Rosemount, Minnesota
November 30, 2021

The President. Whoa. [*Laughter*] Sarah, thank you for that introduction. I was saying to Sarah in the back, because I—when I was Sarah's age, the idea that I'd be standing, waiting to introduce a President—it didn't matter who it was—I would find it a little daunting. And I was trying to reassure her, but obviously she didn't need any reassurance whatsoever. [*Laughter*] Zero. And thank you for your service to the United States military. Really, thank you.

Governor, thanks for the welcome to Minnesota. I was telling the Governor on the way—on the ride here from the airport that I started coming to Minnesota back in 1973 because one of the—my mentors, for real—one of—it ended up being two—was Hubert Humphrey.

When I—he helped me campaign in 1972 as a 29-year-old candidate for the United States Senate in my home State of Delaware, and he gave me credibility I'm not sure I deserve, but it helped a great deal. And after I got elected, there was a—before I was—I wasn't old enough to be sworn in. I had to wait to be eligible. You had to be 30 years old to be sworn in. Your constituents can elect you at any age, but you can't be sworn in until you're 30.

And while I was in Washington, making sure that I was hiring my staff, I got a phone call from my fire department saying there had been an accident. And the poor woman they put on the phone had to say—she just blurted out, "Your wife and daughter are dead, and your kids won't make it." My wife was Christmas shopping and was broadsided by a tractor trailer.

My point about it is that one of the first persons to come to me were the Humphreys—not just the Senator. And then a guy, who became a great friend and mentor was Fritz Mondale, as well.

So I've been from the Iron Range all the way down to your southern—southeastern border, and it's an incredible State, and you've elected some incredible people, including the people you heard from earlier today, which I'll speak to a little bit in a minute.

The—I see a lot of mayors are here. And you know, I told you that's the toughest job in America. They know where you live. [*Laughter*] But it really is. You affect people's lives more than anybody else directly, and you're right there. So thank you for what you do.

And from my administration, I also have the Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona, who is with us today. We served in Congress for a long time, and I'm delighted—I'm delighted—for him being here.

Shooting in Oxford, Michigan

Before I get into my remarks in any detail, I was informed—after the tour, I learned about a school shooting in Michigan. We learned—well, as we learn the full details, my heart goes out to the families enduring the unimaginable grief of losing a loved one. Apparently, there are somewhere in the order of nine people shot, and several—or three, I think, are dead.

And the young man, I think—as I understand it from staff—was about 15 years old, and he turned himself in. And just said he—and he claimed his right against self-incrimination and handed over his pistol. That's all that we know about it. But you've got to know that that whole community has to be just in a state of shock right now.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

But look, one of the things that I want to mention is, I want to tell you about the infrastructure law I signed on Thanksgiving. And it would not be possible—and this is not hyperbole—without the Minnesota congressional delegation.

Senator Amy Klobuchar is a leader on many issues. Her colleagues looked to her on everything from lowering the cost of prescription drugs to how to get broadband to the whole country. And Senator Klobuchar and I have been friends for a while. She knows how to work across the aisle and make progress. It's a big deal. *[Applause]* No, you really do. And not only do her colleagues call for advice, her President calls for advice. *[Laughter]* And you know that's true.

And Senator Tina Smith, she's also led on making sure that Minnesotans and all Americans get access—access to high-speed internet. Senator Smith is making sure that the infrastructure and Build Back Better investments are going to help fight both the causes and the effects of climate change.

And—and Representative Angie Craig, who I'm going to get to ride home with—she's going to get on Air Force One when we're going back. *[Laughter]* I'm going to spend a little time with her. She had a better means of transportation getting out of here. I don't know what it was, but—*[laughter]*.

But all kidding aside, I—we've worked—she's worked on the infrastructure law. She constantly reminds us that it's places like Dakota County, and it's connecting people to jobs and opportunities. And that's why Angie has always been the champion of schools like DCTC and investments in roads and bridges and high-speed internet.

And Representative Dean Phillips. Dean, where are you? Dean—from the very beginning, Dean has led getting bipartisan support to get this deal done. And you'd think this would be a slam dunk, but we did it without all but a few Republicans being able to come across and vote for it. But thank you for the work you did, Dean. I really mean it. And Betty McCollum—Betty has been fighting for a strong infrastructure package for more than a little bit of time. There you are, Betty.

And—but I also want to acknowledge a few other people who couldn't be here today. Your attorney general, Ellison, is such a fighter for justice. And Representative Omar—is he here?

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Oh, okay. I was going to say, I totally would have—reminded us that we all need to invest in our people, in universal precare and affordable childcare.

Look, here's what this is all about——

[At this point, there was feedback from the microphone.]

Rebuilding America, getting this done——

[The feedback continued.]

No. Rebuilding America, investing in America—that's what this is about. And we're doing it as we continue to battle the pandemic.

As I told the American people yesterday, this new variant is a cause of concern, but not a cause to panic. On Thursday, I'll put forward a detailed strategy outlining how we've gone—we're going to fight this COVID this winter, not with shutdowns and lockdowns, but with more widespread vaccinations, boosters, testing, and much more.

In the meantime—*[applause]*. In the meantime, the best protection is getting fully vaccinated—getting a booster shot. I urge all Americans who haven't yet to get that done. Get it

done today. We're going to keep fighting through this with every tool we have, and we are—you know, as we did with the original virus and with the Delta virus—or, variant.

And we're also going to keep our historic economic growth moving. One of the ways we're going to do that is with the bipartisan infrastructure law that we signed into law 2 weeks ago. Over the next several weeks, I'm going to be traveling all over the country, and so will Vice President Harris and my Cabinet and folks throughout this—our administration to show how these investments are going to change your lives, change lives for the better.

Because we know that we can't just build back to what it was before. That used to be the rule. If anything got wiped out by a weather event, you were able to build back that road at exactly the specifications it was before. But you can't now, because the climate is not going to get better. It's—hopefully, we're not going to get worse.

But you're going to have to build that road a couple of feet higher. You can't build it back to what it was. You can't replace those high powerlines that come down with the same kind of construction. They have to be built so they're more resilient. So that's what I mean when I say "build back better." It's necessary.

And the—you know, schools like DCTC are going to help us do just that. In places like this, we're going to train the next generation of workers to do the jobs that my infrastructure law and our Build Back Better Act are going to put into even greater demand. We're going to need more qualified people.

And we're talking about students learning how to repair electric vehicles and battery drivetrains, which are—major auto manufacturers say—will be 40 to 50 percent of all vehicles in the United States of America by the year 2030; becoming line workers we'll need to have to modernize our electrical grid and the commercial electricians who can help us install 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations we're going to put in, including along the highways we're building, so you never have to worry about running out of power.

You'll be able to travel from—[applause]. Training as construction managers to oversee all phases of construction projects we're going to be seeing all across Minnesota, like the Twin Port Interchange and—Ports Interchange in Duluth and the Link project in Rochester. These are the jobs of today and tomorrow. We're going to help America win the competition for the 21st century. We're getting back in the game.

And the better part of the 20th century—for the better part, we led the world by a significant margin because we invested in ourselves and our people. We invested in our infrastructure—in our roads, our highways, our bridges, our ports, our airports—the arteries of our Nation that allow commerce to function smoothly and move swiftly.

And we've invested—we invested in our people. We invested in opportunity in the past. But we're among—we were among the first to provide access to free education in the late 1800s, early 1900s, which had us leap ahead of the rest of the world—the first nation in the world with universal education. We invested to win the space race. We led the world in research and development that led to the creation of the internet. And—but somewhere along the way, we stopped investing. And we're at risk of losing our edge as a nation to China and the rest of the world that's catching up and surpassing us in some areas.

Our infrastructure used to be rated the best in the world—not hyperbole. It was rated the best in the world. But according to the World Economic Forum, we now rank 13th in the world in terms of the quality of our infrastructure.

And we're turning things around in a big way now. It starts with roads and bridges. In 2007, this State sounded the national alarm of our decaying infrastructure when the I-35 bridge

collapsed, killing 13 people and injuring another 140. In the United States of America, a major bridge on a highway collapsed. This is America, for God's sake. And we know about our infrastructure problems; we've known for a long time. Now we're finally doing something about it. No more talking. Time for action. Time for action.

So, folks, this law makes significant investments in our roads and bridges in—the largest investment in nearly 70 years—fixing so many of the 661 bridges and nearly 5,000 miles of highway here in Minnesota—just Minnesota—that are in poor condition.

Those decaying roads cost Minnesota drivers an extra \$543 a year in gas, repairs, and longer commute times—every family. That's 543 hidden dollars in hidden taxes for Minnesota families. And by the way, we might even be able to get something done fixing County Road 42 train crossing. *[Laughter]* We have one in Delaware—we have a train crossing what used to be the General Motors plant. I've counted as many 142 cars sitting there for about 10 hours waiting to cross. *[Laughter]* No way out.

Look, this law includes the most significant investment in passenger rail in the past 50 years—and in public transportation ever—ever. And here in Minnesota, it means replacing transit vehicles that are past their useful life, switching from diesel to electric, getting more people where they have to go safer, faster, and cleaner.

And it means more projects like the Orange Line, which is having its grand opening on Saturday, and is connecting communities along I-35 West with bus rapid transit, making it easier and faster to commute from Burnsville to Bloomberg to—excuse me, to Bloomington to Richville, to major job centers in downtown Minnesota—Minneapolis, Minnesota; to corporate headquarters like U.S. Bank and Best Buy and Target. It's going to change things.

This law invests \$42 billion to modernize our ports and our airports—the Port of Duluth is the largest port in the Great Lakes; or the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, one of the busiest airports in the Midwest—making it easier for companies to get goods to market, reducing supply chain bottlenecks, lowering costs for families, making sure that what you need gets to your ships, your trucks and trains, and eventually to your home on time.

Of course, that's not all this law achieves. The law will start to replace 100 percent of the Nation's lead pipes in the United States and American service lines. A recent survey estimated there are 260,000 or more lead pipelines just here in Minnesota—just Minnesota.

And we'll help communities like Coates build connections to water treatment facilities so every single child in Minnesota and across America can turn on the faucet and drink clean water without their parents worrying about how "forever chemicals"—you ever think you'd hear that phrase 20 years ago, "forever chemicals"?—are in the ground and how they're impacting on the health and well-being of the population.

Folks, this is the United States of America, for God's sake. This is long overdue. We're going to need tens of thousands of plumbers and pipefitters to do the work. And they'll get paid a prevailing wage with benefits and the ability to build a middle class life.

The law is going to make high-speed internet affordable and available everywhere in America, and create jobs laying down the broadband lines. Today, 12 percent of Minnesotans and households don't have internet subscriptions. And in some places, there's no broadband infrastructure at all. This law is going to make high-speed internet affordable and available everywhere in Minnesota—urban, suburban, and rural—with over \$20 billion.

In the 21st century in America, no parent ever should have to sit outside a fast food restaurant—*[laughter]*—to be able to hook up to the internet so their child can do their homework online. Think about that.

The law also builds up our resilience against extreme weather events, which Minnesota is no stranger to, like wildfires this summer in Superior National Forest that sent smoke into the Twin Cities; and tornadoes that touched down in Burnsville and Apple Valley in September; or the heavy rains that have closed roads and contaminated wells in this area in the past.

Nationally—nationally—last year, extreme weather cost the United States Government \$99 billion—just last year. I was out when—those forest fires out in California and Nevada and that area, and it's astounding. More timber and homes and businesses have been burnt to the ground this past fire season than the entire square miles of the State of New Jersey, from New York City all the way down to Cape May. That's how much burned to the ground. Nothing there. I flew over it in helicopters. Nothing.

And you see reservoirs down 40, 50, 60 feet. Worrying about whether the Colorado River is going to continue to flow. This is just dire stuff, but all within our capacity to deal with.

This law builds back our bridges, our water systems, our powerlines, our electric grid better and stronger, more resilient and resistant to the negative impacts and effects of climate change so fewer Americans will be flooded out of their homes or lose power for days and weeks after a storm.

Down in Louisiana—I have with me—who now works with me and handles a big chunk of what I have to do, former chairman of the Black Caucus in the Congress, Cedric Richmond.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. Cedric had me down in Louisiana, in New Orleans. That storm—that hurricane that went through—had high wind peak at 178 miles per hour. But you know what? When I went from there up to North Jersey and New York, more people died in Manhattan—in Queens, Manhattan, because of 20 inches of rain falling and their basements flooding so they couldn't get out. More people died there than did in the hurricane in New Orleans.

Folks, there's so much more in the law. Most of all, this law does something truly historic. It's going to help rebuild the backbone in this Nation: working people and the middle class. When I ran for President I said I was running for three reasons. One, to restore the soul of the country—to have some—restore some decency in how we dealt with one another. And two—and two—to rebuild the backbone of the country: hard-working, middle class folks and working class folks who built the country.

Folks on Wall Street aren't bad, but they didn't build America. The people who work—coming out of this school are the ones who built America. They built America, and they've been left behind for much too long. And we're going to rebuild this economy from the bottom up and the middle out.

I've never known a time when the middle class has done well that the very wealthy haven't done very, very well. I'm not being solicitous. I'm being deadly earnest. But I'm tired of this trickle-down economy. I'm tired of it.

This is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America. And the only way this works is if the blue-collar Americans do the building. And that's the only way it's ever worked. And we are going to do it again. Mark my words. Mark my words. The same goes for my plan to build back better for our people. For example, the cost of a 2-year degree in Minnesota is nearly \$6,000 a year. Over a third of the students at DCTC receive Pell grants. My Build Back Better plan is going to increase the maximum Pell grant award by another \$550 to make it more affordable.

We're going to invest an unprecedented \$10 billion in job training programs at a school like—schools like this one; and expand registered apprenticeships and preapprenticeship

programs. And—and very importantly—this bill will deliver universal preschool to every 3- and 4-year-old in America.

Folks, one study found that the low-income children participating in a preschool program were 47-percent more likely to go on and earn an associate or a higher degree after going through 12 years of school, without problems.

We have to build the foundation for success. My wife Jill is a community college professor and has been for some time. She always points out: Any nation that outeducates us is going to outcompete us. It's a simple proposition.

Look what the rest of the world is doing. Look at what the rest of the world is doing. China is investing billions of dollars in early education. I can go down the list.

Look, this Build Back Better plan is also going to ensure that parents can afford childcare and that childcare—and that childcare workers can actually get a raise and—a raise they deserve—and more education.

If you're paying \$14,000 for childcare, like a lot of Minnesota families do, my Build Back Better plan is going to make a giant difference in your life because your childcare costs will not be—will be capped at 7 percent of your income—7 percent. That's it. Seven percent of your income.

That's going to make a huge difference for the economy overall, but for millions of workers who had to drop out of the workforce not because they wanted to, but because they couldn't find available childcare—especially the 2 million women who left the workforce during this COVID crisis.

If you're one of the millions of Americans paying too much for insulin, my Build Back Better plan is going to change that as well, because we're going to lower prescription drug costs. And that means you won't pay more than \$35 a month for your insulin. It's important not only from a health standpoint, but from a standpoint of personal dignity.

Imagine if you're a parent of one of the 200,000 children in this country with type 1 diabetes needing that insulin. Insulin can cost as much as \$1,000 a month. If you can't afford it, it's not only a health risk, but it deprives a parent of their dignity. It deprives them of their dignity, of your ability to do one thing every parent wants and deserves to be able to do: to say to their child—to look at them and say, "Honey, it's going to be okay." Imagine not being able to say that.

And by the way, we're not artificially reducing that cost. It costs \$35 for the insulin when it was first invented and patented. They've done not a single thing since then to improve it; it's good. And now it costs \$1,000 a month?

Folks, lowering the cost of childcare, eldercare, housing, health care, prescription drugs, and meeting the moment on climate change, that's what this plan does. Frankly, I'm surprised that not a single Republican in Congress has joined us in supporting it. It can't be because it would add to inflation. Seventeen Nobel laureates—seventeen—3 weeks ago, spontaneously sent me a letter saying that it would have the opposite effect; it would actually reduce long-term inflationary pressures.

It can't be because it would add to the deficit, because it reduces the deficit over the long term. It can't be because it's fiscally responsible, because it's fully paid for—fully paid for. No one—no one—earning less than \$400,000 a year will pay a single penny more in Federal taxes.

Fifty-five percent—and I come from the corporate State of America: Delaware. More corporations are incorporated in Delaware than every other nation and every other—excuse me—

State in the Nation. And guess what? Fifty-five percent of the Fortune 500 companies—the largest ones—paid zero in income taxes last year after making \$40 billion in profits.

I'm a capitalist. If you can make a million or a billion dollars, have at it. Just pay your fair share. That's all I'm asking. That's why the Build Back Better plan has a minimum tax that makes sure that large, profitable corporations start paying their fair share. And we got passed, internationally, a provision that a 15-percent minimum is paid in every single country so you don't have countries fleeing here with technology to go other places because they have a lower tax rate.

The first major piece of legislation in more than a decade—and it's not only fully paid for. Based on official estimates from the Congressional Budget Office, the Joint Committee on Taxation, the Treasury Department, it's going to generate more than \$100 billion in deficit reduction this decade.

So, look, I know some people have said this bill isn't fiscally responsible enough. Because even though it's fully paid for, they acknowledge; even though it would reduce the deficit, which they acknowledge; even though it represents the first time in over a decade that we're doing the hard work of offsetting investments with new revenue, some of the programs may get extended. And if they get extended, they say, it's going to cost more money. We didn't count that in.

Well, that's true. Congress is going to pay for those as well. After years of Republican leadership in Washington passing tax giveaways to the superwealthy, new spending without even giving a thought about how to pay for it—they added \$8 trillion to the national debt with the Trump tax cut—\$8 trillion.

I welcome a serious conversation about how to pay for the investments we make, but here is what those critics are not telling you. They're not telling you that I've committed to paying for every single program that extended, if any are, in future legislation, whether that's for a day or a decade.

And here's what else they're not telling you. They're not telling you why it is that they're fighting so hard against lowering the prices of prescription drugs or childcare or eldercare or health care; why it is that they're so frightened, so hard to—fighting so incredibly hard to protect the 2017 Trump tax cuts that increase the deficit alone by nearly \$2 trillion—the bulk of which went to large corporations and virtually none of it paid for. I'm happy to have that debate on—about how to pay for these priorities.

In my Build Back Better plan, we're already undoing some of the most reckless elements of the Trump tax bill, like ending the tax breaks for companies sending jobs overseas. We've got a—we got a tax cut for sending a job overseas. But other tax giveaways in the bill that expire. That bill expires in 2025; it has to be reauthorized. For example, the tax rate for the 1 percent wealthiest Americans used to be 39.6 percent. You make it sound—they make it sound like it used to be 70 percent or something—39.6 percent, what it was in the Bush administration.

The Trump tax cut cut that to 37 percent. Just by restoring that tax back to 39.7—what it was in the Bush years—just by doing that would generate an additional \$20 billion a year in revenue—enough to pay for universal preschool for all 3- and 4 years old, all the way through.

So, folks, we're going to face a choice. Do we keep giving tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent of the taxpayers or do we keep lowering costs for working families? You know, we—I think we have something like 730-some billionaires in America. That's fine. You make a billion dollars; I'm okay with that.

But you know what? You know how much money, when everybody was losing money during the recession—the prerecession—you know how much money those 739, I think it is, made? Another trillion dollars. You hear me now?

Those 735—whatever the number is—made an additional trillion dollars in that year and a half. Trillion. I didn't hear anybody weeping and gnashing their teeth—[laughter]—about any of that.

If they want to argue about continuing tax cuts for big corporations and the wealthiest Americans is more important than lowering the cost of childcare, lowering prescription drug prices, that's an argument I'm happy to have. I'm looking forward to that debate.

One of the reasons I believe so firmly in the proposal is because I know what this country can be. We've always been a nation of possibilities. I was asked by Xi Jinping—I travel—I spent, with him, more time than any other world leader. And I was in—17,000 miles with him in China. And he turned to me in one of our many one-on-one meetings—with an interpreter, each—and asked me, said, "Can you define America for me?" I said, "Yes." I said, "One word: possibilities."

Think about it. No other nation in the world—one of the reasons why we think we're ugly Americans is, no other nation in the world believes that anything we set our minds to, we can do. Because when we've done it, we've never failed. Folks, we didn't become this Nation we know by dreaming small. Throughout our history, we've emerged from crisis by investing in ourselves.

During and after the Civil War, we built—during the Civil War, it started—the transcontinental railroad, uniting the East Coast and the West Coast. During the cold war, we built the Interstate Highway System—transformed how Americans live their lives. And now we're going to build an economy of the 21st century.

I truly believe that 50 years from now—and I mean this from the bottom of my heart—historians are going to look back on this moment and the next several years, and they're going to say that this was the moment when America won the competition for the 21st century. Because if we don't, we're going to lose it. We going to lose it.

So, folks, there's nothing we can't do. When the American people set their mind to something, there's never been anything we cannot do. And there's never been a crisis we've got into that we haven't come out stronger than before we went into it. That's who we are. That's America.

Well, God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. And thanks for your patience.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:36 p.m. at Dakota County Technical College. In his remarks, he referred to Sarah Riviere-Herzan, student, Dakota County Technical College; Gov. Timothy J. Walz; Mayor Jacob L. Frey of Minneapolis, MN; Mayor Melvin Carter of Saint Paul, MN; Hana St. Juliana, Tate Myre, and Madisyn Baldwin, who were killed in the shooting at Oxford High School; Ethan Crumbley, suspected gunman in the shooting; White House Director of Public Engagement Cedric L. Richmond; and President Xi Jinping of China. He also referred to H.R. 5376.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in Rosemount, MN.

Locations: Rosemount, MN.

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